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# How to Assess Language in the Social Studies Classroom

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Until recently, little attention has been paid to the language and academic needs of English as a second language (ESL) students in the social studies classroom. In the most recent review and one of the few written on social studies texts and instruction, Short (1998) found that ESL students do not receive the language and academic support they need to master the abstract vocabulary and difficult reading and writing assignments that are endemic to social studies. In spite of the lack of recent research into the language demands of social studies, recent textbook series have responded to pressure from schools around the country to address the needs of ESL students. In a review of six teacher's annotated editions of high school U.S. history textbooks published between 1995 and 1998, which included Boyer (1998); Danzer et al. (1998); Downey, Giese,

and Metcalf (1997); Drewery and O'Connor (1995); Mason et al. (1997); and Ritchie (1997), we found that publishers have made good progress in addressing the needs of ESL students. All but one of the texts contains varied suggestions for accessing the content and providing background or the prior student knowledge assumed to be held by most students. Activities such as teaching suggestions that include cultural background activities, Spanish language editions, vocabulary exercises, the use of audiotapes, and heterogeneous grouping were common in the texts.

Still, there is much work that must be done. To succeed and function independently in an English-only classroom, an ESL student must reach a level of competence that Cummins (1979) termed Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). According to Cummins, CALP concerns the ability to express in writing higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. That ability is interdependent with the first language. Students who enter the classroom without having developed higher-order literacy skills in their first language spend from five to seven years gaining those skills in their second language. Given the fact that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation

requires that ESL students enter mainstream classroom work within three years, few students will enter a social studies classroom with the necessary skills. After three years of ESL, most students will have achieved Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Students at that level can ask and answer simple factual recall questions, converse about personal experiences, and describe the events in their lives, but their reading and writing skills may be extremely low.

The disparity between ESL students' current level of language development and the language demands of the social studies classroom presents a difficult situation for social studies teachers. Even those who are knowledgeable in the most effective techniques for ESL instruction find themselves forced to assess students who have learned a great deal orally but have not had the time to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency needed to succeed in class. Written assignments, for instance, which require students to compare and contrast two figures in history or to evaluate the actions of a particular group, are very common but represent a difficult challenge for students who have not achieved CALP because such an assignment calls on students to

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engage in reading and writing tasks that require higher-order thinking skills.

Assessing the work of ESL students confronted with such difficult tasks is the other side of the problem. Most contemporary scholars ask teachers to draw on the techniques and philosophy of authentic assessment (see Czarra 1999; Morris 2001; Suiter 1998). According to O'Malley and Pierce (1996), authentic assessment calls on students to demonstrate specific skills or behaviors. The teacher explains assessment tasks to the students ahead of time, gives a variety of assessments throughout the unit of study, and may even request that the students assess their own work. Assessments are most often teacher-made and may take on a variety of forms, such as checklists, portfolios, rubrics, and anecdotal records.

Within the literature on social studies, authentic assessment is well discussed and considered a highly effective body of practices and philosophy (Avery 1999; Avery et al. 1999; Morris 2001; Nickell and Wilson 1999; Yell 1999). The general philosophy of assessment is consistent with what is described by O'Malley and Pierce (1996) and embodied in various descriptions of practice written by teachers and researchers. Avery et al. describe the value of rubrics in a social studies unit on immigration for high school students. Although the actual rubric was simple and required that native English speakers listen to and document selected facts about the immigration experiences of ESL students (primarily students from Somalia), it produced a number of positive changes. Teachers found that authentic assessment naturally led them to draw more connections for their students between the immigration experiences of a century ago and today. Assignments that required higher-level thinking became the norm as students analyzed patterns of migration, the "push" and "pull" factors of migration, concepts of cultural systems, and the effects of political policy and history on individuals.

Nickell and Wilson (1999) discuss the benefits of observation and offer suggestions concerning how it can be

conducted in the social studies classroom. Effective practices include observing students approximately three times a semester, informing students in advance of their observation, and holding conferences with the students following the observation. Nickell and Wilson use rubrics to record observations, and although they do not focus on how to create rubrics, they do offer some advice. First, students' previous work should serve as the benchmark for progress. Descriptors such as "strong progress," "some progress," and "needs practice" are examples of teachers' effective responses. More static terms like "fair," "good," and "excellent" imply a set standard. Second, to the extent possible, teachers need to prepare rubrics that can be used repeatedly. Finally, teachers allow students to practice the assessed task with other students before the actual assessment.

Although those are excellent examples of the use of authentic assessment techniques to measure the progress of native English speakers, a discussion of how to assess the content knowledge and language skills of ESL students who enter the classroom with limited English language skills is missing. When the significant linguistic demands of social studies texts and instruction are taken into account, that hole in the literature leaves social studies teachers with some significant questions about how to assess all students equitably: Should teachers, for instance, use the same instrument to assess content knowledge of native English speakers and the ESL students? If so, does that give an unfair advantage to the native English speakers? Can a separate instrument be used to assess the ESL students without sacrificing high standards for all of the students? Is the answer for the teacher to give more assistance to the ESL students? Those questions are unanswered in the discussion of how to link assessment to content.

In this article, we begin addressing those questions by showing how conducting language assessment, while often the work of the ESL teacher, can be done by the social studies teacher and coordinated with the content of a

particular lesson. We describe how to assess the language development of ESL students entering a social studies classroom, determine the language demands of a particular lesson, and measure an ESL student's progress. We include examples of student work to illustrate the process.

### **Conducting a Content-coordinated Language Assessment in Three Steps**

#### *Step 1: Determine the Language Level of the Student*

The first piece of information the interested social studies teacher should acquire is the student's language proficiency on exiting the ESL program at the school. According to Roos (1995), when students who speak a language other than English at home enter school, they must take a standardized language proficiency exam. Those are administered by a testing coordinator or an ESL teacher or administrator who has completed the necessary training. Many such exams are available, but the three that are widely used are the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), the Idea Proficiency Test, and the Woodcock Munoz Language Survey. Each examination provides a highly detailed picture of a student's level of proficiency in writing, reading, listening, and speaking. The exams are given once a year to determine a student's entry-level proficiency and to determine when a student can exit the ESL program.

Teachers should also conduct a classroom-based assessment of the student's English-language proficiency. A teacher's knowledge of the specific language skills of the students allows him or her to set performance levels for assessments that are based on the stages of second-language acquisition. Moreover, an understanding of second-language proficiency gives the teacher an accurate picture of what kinds of progress, in terms of language development and in mastery of the associated social studies content, a teacher can reasonably expect from the students.

Two commercially prepared and widely used rubrics for conducting a

classroom-based language proficiency assessment are the Student Oral Language Matrix (SOLM) and the stages of second language acquisition. Both are appropriate for students of all ages, and a classroom teacher, with some training, can use them. Teachers can find a more readily available and usable rubric in the text *Scenarios for ESL Standards-based Assessment* (2001). That rubric breaks down the levels of second-language proficiency into beginning, intermediate, and advanced across the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In table 1, we draw on *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (1997) and summarize the levels of proficiency.

To use table 1 and determine a student's level of proficiency, teachers should begin gathering data after the student has gained some comfort in the classroom, knows the classroom routines, and is willing to participate in instructional activities. It is a good idea to create a checklist of the points listed in table 1 as a way of keeping track of the specific ways that the student is using language. According to *Scenarios for ESL Standards-based Assessment*, data should be gathered in a number of settings in which the students are using

language for both academic and social purposes. Teachers should try to collect data across all four language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

To illustrate how to collect such information and determine a student's language proficiency, we provide a short description of a high school student named Ling Fong. Although he studied English and American history in Taiwan, this is the first time he has learned social studies through English-language instruction. Ling, who is fifteen years old, has been in Mrs. Simpson's class for about three weeks and knows the routines of the classroom and the expectations concerning homework. He is beginning to participate in small-group discussions with his classmates. Mrs. Simpson has been observing Ling Fong over the last week to determine his current level of English.

The first observation was centered on his ability with oral language. It is an election year, and so Mrs. Simpson spends time each week discussing the events surrounding the upcoming presidential election. As an introduction to her short discussions on the election, Mrs. Simpson paired the students and

asked each pair to make a list of the words that they had heard that were related to the election and then to write two questions about the election. Mrs. Smith listened and took notes as Ling Fong talked with his classmate, Max. The boys first began with some chit-chat about each other and then began listing the vocabulary words.

Max: So, how do you say your name?

Ling Fong: You say, "Lee-am Fong."

Max: Oh, cool name. Are you from China?

Ling Fong: No, I am Taiwanese.

Max: How did you get here? Boat?

Ling Fong: No, too far. I took a plane with my dad. She's a doctor here.

Max: Can you think of some words related to politics? How about congress, um . . . election, senator? What is the guy called who is in charge of the state? He is like Schwarzenegger?

Ling Fong: Yeah, um . . . Because of the terminator. . . See, how to say . . .

Max: Oh yeah, governor! What about a question?

Ling Fong: How to say about the politics?

At the end of the week, Mrs. Simpson asked her students to write a paragraph describing what they had learned about the elections. Ling Fong wrote the following:

At four years, the president becomes anew. America has one presidential this year. Not again for four years. Taiwan is same. Our presidential is the same.

What can Mrs. Simpson learn from these observations? From the dialogue, Mrs. Simpson noted that Ling Fong could use English to discuss and answer questions about routine events and topics in his personal life. For instance, he told where he is from and how he got to the United States. Although he used the incorrect pronoun when naming his father, which is not uncommon for Chinese speakers. When the discussion turned toward the more abstract topic of politics, Ling Fong began to struggle. He was unable, for instance, to answer Max's question about the office of the governor or to form a question for the assignment. He consistently answered

**TABLE 1. Summary of Language Proficiency Levels**

Level of proficiency	Language skill	
	Reading/writing	Listening/speaking
Beginning	Reliance on pictures for meaning, can generate simple texts, may use invented spellings, syntax may borrow heavily from the native language.	May respond with single-word utterances or not at all. Simple phrases emerge as proficiency increases.
Intermediate	Proficiency varies but depends heavily on the student's background knowledge of or experience with the theme or concepts in the text. Although students can possibly write complex texts, their work contains many errors.	Students' speaking still contains several grammatical errors. They may have to hear something several times before understanding. They can use language in daily situations, but struggle with longer utterances.
Advanced	Students can read and produce texts written for academic or social purposes, but will struggle with texts that are abstract. Comprehension problems occur occasionally.	Students can easily converse on personal topics, but they will struggle to use and comprehend idioms and various figures of speech. It is difficult for them to express their understanding of abstract concepts.

in short utterances, and made a number of grammatical errors.

Similarly, the written paragraph contains numerous grammatical errors. Ling Fong is trying to use new vocabulary, but he is not yet sure about sentence boundaries or the forms of many new words. As with his speaking, he is restricted in writing to using fairly short utterances and struggles with word morphology and

The first two are self-evident, but the third requires some explanation. It concerns knowledge of how and when to access different registers of language. For instance, students should be aware that there is a way of speaking to a school principal that is more formal than what is required to speak with their friends after school. This is determined by the mores of American culture and

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## **Teachers need to choose the progress indicator that most closely matches the activity that students are to perform. Thinking skills that are common to all activities are the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of academic information.**

syntax. Mrs. Simpson concludes that Ling Fong best fits the intermediate category of language proficiency.

### *Step 2: Associate Content Standards and Activities with Language*

The next step is to determine the language demands that a particular lesson puts on the students. That requires the teacher to associate the language demands of the lesson with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) standards, goals, and progress indicators. We offer a vignette of a typical social studies activity for the purposes of analysis, but before addressing that, an explanation of the TESOL standards is necessary. The *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (1997) includes three kinds of goals. Each goal has three standards associated with it. Standards are broad statements defining what students should be able to do with the language. Goals "indicate the focus on social or academic language or socio-cultural use of language" (26). The three goals are as follows:

Goal 1. To use English to communicate in social settings (23)

Goal 2. To use English to achieve academically in all content areas (24)

Goal 3. To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways (24)

reflected in the conventions of the English language.

For the vignette, we report an activity presented by a middle-school social studies teacher who is beginning a unit on government. The teacher has six ESL students in her class of thirty, and she has determined that all six are at the intermediate level of proficiency. We have listed the national history standards for a point of reference.

National History Standards (Historical Thinking Standards, grades 5-12):

Standard 1—Chronological Thinking (that is, distinguish between past, present, and future time)

Standard 3—Historical Analysis and Interpretation (that is, consider multiple perspectives; compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions)

### *Vignette*

In the first activity in her lesson on the concept of history, Mrs. Simpson endeavors to learn what the students think history is and what it means to "do" history through a "think, pair, share" experience. Students first think about and then write a few notes about what they think history is. After approximately four minutes, Mrs. Simpson instructs the students to form pairs and talk about what each thought about and

wrote. She tells them that they may wish to edit what they initially wrote after talking with their partner because she believes that verbalizing one's thoughts and comparing them with another's might inspire additional thoughts. After approximately five minutes, she instructs each pair to partner with another pair. Cooperative learning is a common occurrence in Mrs. Simpson's class, so her students need only minimal direction about taking on small-group roles. Each group includes a reporter, recorder, materials manager, and a taskmaster. She provides each group with copies of a variety of magazines, photocopies of images (for example, photographs and paintings) of familiar events, symbols, and people in U.S. history. She varies the age of the artifacts and includes formal and informal images. For example, she includes a copy of the Dunlap broadside of the Declaration of Independence and a photograph of firefighters raising the American flag at the World Trade Center site after the September 11 attacks, along with historical artifacts from the local community (for example, a copy of the original city charter, a photo of a recent Veteran's Day parade). Students are given fifteen minutes to examine each of the artifacts, answering the following questions about each one:

Describe the artifact (that is, form and content).

To what event or era do you think each artifact is related? Describe your thoughts and what evidence you used to make that decision.

Is this a historical artifact based on your definition of history? Why or why not?

The first step is to identify the activities that require students to use language and note the means: reading, writing, speaking, or listening. In this vignette, there are three modes of communicating:

1. Students first think about and write a few notes about what they think history is.

2. Mrs. Simpson instructs students to form pairs and talk about what each thought about and wrote.

3. Students are given fifteen minutes to examine each of the artifacts, commenting on the following points about each one:

- a. Describe the artifact (that is, form and content)
- b. State the event or era to which you think each artifact is related, and describe your thoughts and the evidence you used to make that decision
- c. State whether this is a historical artifact, based on your definition of history, and list the reasons for your decision

The first mode calls on the students to use writing skills, and the second and third call on students to use speaking skills. Next, the activities are associated with TESOL standards and goals. In this vignette, all three activities require students to use language for academic purposes and can be associated with goal 2 of *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (1997, 24). Because the activity calls on students to process academic information in written and oral modes, the activity meets standard 2 of *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (49).

The final step is to select the appropriate progress indicator. According to *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*, a progress indicator is an "assessable, observable activity for students to perform to show progress in meeting the standard" (26). Each goal and standard has several progress indicators, and they are not separated by language proficiency level but by grade level. Because the TESOL standards are to be used formatively and in the spirit of authentic assessment, teachers need to choose the progress indicator that most closely matches the activity that the students are to perform. The set of thinking skills that is common to all of the activities is the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of academic information. Teachers can find an appropriate choice for a progress indicator in *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* (87). In the section that follows, the progress indicator is used as a building block for the assessment instrument.

### Step 3: Select or Create the Assessment Instrument

The next step is for the teacher to determine the particular assessment instrument that will be used. The types of possible instruments used in authentic assessment include portfolios, rubrics, checklists, conferences, anecdotal records, and peer reviews. In selecting the appropriate instrument for an analysis of second-language use, the question teachers should ask is whether the instrument will be used to measure the progress indicator as a dichotomous or developmental variable. As a dichotomous variable, the progress indicator is written as a statement with a yes or no answer, and the purpose of the observation is to determine the presence or absence of the progress indicator. Thus, the progress indicator selected for the aforementioned activity would be, Has the student used language to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate information? The most appropriate assessment instru-

ments for measuring progress indicators as dichotomous variables are checklists and anecdotal records. Table 2 contains an example of a simple checklist.

The actual assessment instrument, which is on the bottom half of the instrument, is a revision of the progress indicators. Goals, standards, student language level, and the content activities are placed above and provide information on how and under what circumstances the student was able to fulfill the particular goals and standards. The teacher completes the checklist by walking around the classroom while the students are working in their groups, listening for comments, and then checking off the responses. If the teacher chooses to measure the progress indicator as a developmental variable, then the object of the assessment is to document development over a set period of time. Rubrics and portfolios become the prime choice for instruments, and knowledge of a student's language proficiency is used to set the criteria for each level.

**TABLE 2. Content and Language Assessment Instrument**

1. *Content Standard*  
Standard 1—Chronological Thinking (e.g., distinguish between past, present, and future time).  
Standard 3—Historical Analysis and Interpretation (e.g., consider multiple perspectives; compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions).
2. *TESOL Standards, Goal, and Progress Indicators*  
Goal 2: "To use English to achieve academically in all content areas" (*ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* 1997, 24).  
Standard 2: "To use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form" (*ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* 1997, 49).  
Progress Descriptor: "The student uses language to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information."
3. *Proficiency Level of Student*  
Intermediate
4. *Content Activities Associated with Language*  
a. Students first think about and write a few notes about what they think history is.  
b. Mrs. Simpson instructs students to form pairs and talk about what each thought about and wrote.  
c. Students are given 15 minutes to examine each of the artifacts and to answer the following: a) Describe the artifact (that is, form and content); b) describe the event or era you think each artifact is related to and your thoughts and what evidence you used to make that decision; c) state whether this is a historical artifact based on your definition of history. Give reasons for your conclusions.

#### Content and language assessment instrument

- Has the student used language to synthesize content? (Yes, No)
- Has the student used English to analyze content? (Yes, No)
- Has the student used English to evaluate information? (Yes, No)

Students who are at an advanced level, for instance, will have to meet a different set of language competencies than will those at a beginning level. The progress indicator is then rewritten so that the object of the assessment is to measure over a period of time the development of language in relation to the content. How long the student is to be observed depends on the assignment. In this case, the assignment is likely to take the students one week. A number of scholars (see Airasian 2001; Mertler 2001; Montgomery 2001; Nitko 2001) have described the specific steps in designing a rubric. We follow Mertler's summary of steps in designing the rubric.

Mertler suggests that teachers identify the learning objectives and then identify specific observable behaviors that can be assessed. The learning objectives for this activity and the progress indicators represent the specific observable behaviors. In the remaining steps, teachers write the narrative descriptions of each level of the rubric and then, if possible, collect student work to serve as an example of each level. For this rubric, teachers give special attention to the level of proficiency in crafting the narratives. For purposes of explanation, we selected the intermediate level of proficiency. To complete the assignment, the students work in groups during a span of one week to create and explain their own definition of history. Because the ESL students are at an intermediate level, the expectations for the rubric will have to reflect their reliance on experience with a particular genre, concept, or idea within a text. Grammatical inaccuracies, which are to be expected, do not count heavily against the students. As noted in the assessment in table 2, teachers can include background information, such as goals, standards, and progress indicators and activities that are being assessed.

In designing a rubric, the most difficult task concerns decisions about how to distinguish among levels of proficiency. The rubric (table 3) in this article is divided into the following three categories: approaches the standard, meets the standard, and exceeds the standard. The specific criteria are a combination

of the task that the students are called on to do, which in this case is to create their own definition of history, and the associated TESOL standard, goal, and progress indicator. General expectations about language development are guided by the summary of proficiency levels (see table 1).

The question of how much assistance a student needs or how independently a student can work on an assignment is the measurement of those gains. Notice that the rubric moves the student from requiring a great deal of assistance at the "approaches standard" level, to some assistance at "meets the standard" level, and then to working without assistance at the "exceeds the standard" level. Across all levels, the task itself remains the same. That, of course, allows for all students to be graded on the same assignment. The only distinction that is being made is how much assistance is being given.

The decision for keeping the demands of the assignment constant but varying the amount of assistance needed is consistent with what educators call content-based instruction, a widely accepted instructional theory and practice used with ESL students. The instructional practices of content-based instruction are organized around Krashen's (1982) concept of comprehensible input. According to Krashen, learners acquire a second language best when it is presented at just beyond their current level of competence. The teacher's responsibility is to scaffold the language that the students read or hear. As the students improve, the teacher slowly removes the scaffolds for the students until they can work independently. The specific techniques are shared with literacy specialists and include anticipation guides, field trips, structured overviews of readings, activities and discussions that build vocabulary, and visual aids to demonstrate new vocabulary. Examples of content-based

texts for ESL students are many and include McCloskey and Stack (1996a, 1996b) and McCloskey et al. (1996).

An example of Ling Fong's work from the lesson in which the students are asked to analyze artifacts given to them by Mrs. Simpson illustrates how to assess students' work. In Ling Fong's group, the students received a picture of the Twin Towers after the September 11 attacks. For the particular assignment, Mrs. Simpson gathered samples of Ling Fong's written response to the assignment and took notes as he gave his presentation. The written assignments follow. The first sample is Ling Fong's first assignment without any assistance from Mrs. Simpson.

Today, we saw the pictures. It is September 11. The worst day of America. Sad for American. It is curen history. My group think it history. Because history of the importance event for the future.

A number of features concerning content and language can be observed. In terms of language, it is evident that Ling Fong is making a number of errors that are typical of Chinese speakers. He is struggling to use tense correctly. He switches from past to present tense in the same paragraph. There is one spelling error and an incomplete sentence. What is also evident is that he has used language to analyze the event and formed a definition of history, which is evident in the final sentences in which he wrote, "because history of the importance event for the future." The teacher can use this interesting clause as a starting point for assistance. The teacher can also help with the consistent pattern of errors in use of tenses. Mrs. Simpson asked Ling Fong to underline the sentence that he believed gives a definition of history and then asked him to explain it more fully. Ling Fong said that history is an important event. Next, they worked on using verb tenses correctly. The result is the following.

**TABLE 3. Rubric for Assessing Students' Language Ability**

Approaches the standard	Meets the standard	Exceeds the standard

Today, we saw a picture of a building. It was September 11th. It was the worst day for America. It was sad for Americans. It was current history. [However,] it is an important event for the future and for all people.

This short paragraph shows that, with Mrs. Simpson's help, Ling Fong has used language to analyze the picture of the September 11 incident, synthesize what he has discussed with his group, and form a definition of history. In terms of content, Ling Fong has met the requirements of the assignment. In terms of the language assessment, Mrs. Simpson noted that Ling Fong accurately used the past-tense verbs, corrected the spelling errors, and fixed incomplete sentences. Mrs. Simpson noted that she inserted the word "however" to remind Ling Fong and herself that that was a new structure for Ling Fong to use. Ling Fong can place the assignment in a notebook, mark the sentence, and use it as a model sentence for later assignments. Mrs. Simpson noted that she helped Ling Fong three times to complete the assignment. Two sessions primarily concerned language assistance, when Ling Fong was the only student whom she was addressing. In the third instance, she addressed the whole group more generally about the assignment. From that information, Mrs. Simpson concluded that Ling Fong had met the standard.

## Conclusion

The benefit of assessing students' language ability as a regular part of social studies instruction and of understanding the relationships among scaffolding, assessment, and language instruction is clear. The strategy allows the social studies teacher to conduct a fair assessment when faced with a mixed class of native English-speaking students and ESL students struggling to complete the complex reading and writing assignments that characterize social studies texts. Teachers in such classes do not have to choose between failing all of the ESL students and maintaining high standards or giving all the ESL students high grades. By assessing the language development of the students as part of the

instruction, social studies teachers assess their ESL students without sacrificing the integrity of assignments.

In the larger picture, the question becomes one of finding and defining equitable practices in the increasingly diverse classrooms in America's schools as the number of ESL students across the country grows. According to Kindler (2002), the total number of ESL students in grades K-12 is estimated at 4,416,580 for the 2002-2003 school year. That number represents an increase of 27 percent since 1997. At present, ESL students account for approximately 10 percent of the total public school student enrollment. Although many (47 percent) of the students are in elementary school, 43 percent are in secondary school and middle school classrooms. The texts that teachers use and the content they must teach are an important body of knowledge, but the language demands that they put on ESL students must be considered during instruction and assessment. The final test resides with the social studies teachers who can make their classes a model place for equality and democracy for all students.

*Key words: assessment in ESL regular social studies classes, ESL students in social studies, equality and democracy in ESL classes, guide for ESL social studies assessment*

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